

Message Text

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42

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 AEC-11 AID-20 CEA-02 CIEP-02

COME-00 EB-11 FEA-02 FPC-01 INT-08 OMB-01 SAM-01

SCI-06 STR-08 TRSE-00 (ISO) W
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R 191018Z MAR 74

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3200

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, NI, US

SUBJECT: NEWSWEEK PROVOKES SHARP PRESS REACTIONS

SUMMARY: COVER STORY ON NIGERIA IN NEWSWEEK INTERNATIONAL EDITION GREETED WITH EVIDENT OFFICIAL SATISFACTION BUT HAS PROVOKED NUMBER OF SHARP PRESS REACTIONS. END SUMMARY

1. NIGERIAN OFFICIALS WITH WHOM RECENT NEWSWEEK INTERNATIONAL EDITION COVER STORY ON NIGERIA HAS BEEN DISCUSSED HAVE INDICATED QUIET SATISFACTION WITH POSITIVE TONE AND BALANCED CONTENT. WHILE REACTIONS LOW-KEY, SEVERAL SHOWED EVIDENT SATISFACTION AT STORY'S IDENTIFICATION OF NIGERIA AS POWER OF GROWING IMPORTANCE ON AFRICAN AND WORLD SCENE.

2. PRESS REACTION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN LESS FAVORABLE. INITIAL REPORTING REFLECTED SAME SATISFACTION AS SHOWN
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PRIVATELY BY OFFICIALS, WHILE EARLY COMMENTARIES TREATED

STORY TWO WAYS: (A) SOME CITED NEWSWEEK CATALOG OF PROBLEMS REMAINING TO BE SOLVED AND URGED FMG REALIGN PRIORITIES SO AS TO IMPROVE WELFARE OF NIGERIAN MASSES -- A FOVAORITE RECENT THEME FOR COLUMNISTS AND EDITORIALISTS; (B) OTHER COMMENTATORS COMPARED POSITIVE TONE OF CURRENT STORY WITH NEGATIVE REPORTS DURING CIVIL WAR PERIOD AND WARNED THAT FOREIGN "FLATTERERS" AND "SYCOPHANTS" WERE REALLY INTERESTED ONLY IN NIGERIA'S OIL AND THAT THEIR SIREN SONGS SHOULD BE APPROACHED WITH CARE.

3. TONE BECAME SHARPLY CIRITICAL IN SECOND WAVE OF COMMENTS AFTER AMERICAN EDITION OF NEWSWEEK BECAME AVAILABLE IN NIGERIA WITH SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT PRESENTATION OF FEATURE STORY. PRESS SEIZED ON LESS FLATTERING PHOTOS USED IN AMERICAN VERSION TO CONTEND THAT NEWSWEEK EDITORS SEEKING FLATTER NIGERIA WITH INTERNATIONAL EDITION WHILE PRODUCING DOMESTIC VERSION TO FIT "NORTH AMERICAN IMAGE OF EMERGENT AFRICA." TWO WRITERS ALSO NOTED THAT ONLY AMERICAN EDITION CARRIED PURPORTED QUOTE FROM GENERAL GOWON SUGGESTING HE MIGHT NOT BE PREPARED YIELD POWER IN 1976. VARIATIONS BETWEEN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL EDITIONS CASTIGATED AS "DOUBLE DEALING" "HYPOCRISY" "DECEPTION" AND "SLIMY JOURNALISM", AND LED TO FRESH SPATE OF WARNINGS TO NIGERIANS TO BE ON THEIR GUARD AGAINST FOREIGN SEDUCERS.

4. COMMENT: PRESS REAACTION REVELAS AGAIN AUTOMATIC NIGERIAN SUSPICION OF EXTERNAL INFLUENCES SHOWN IN TREATMENT OF ONWAUCHI CHARGES REPORTED LAGOS 2151. UNFORTUNATE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TWO NEWSWEEK EDITIONS LENT CREDENCE TO THIS SUSPICION IN NIGERIAN EYES, AND ADDED FUEL TO CHARGES WHICH MIGHT WELL HAVE SURFACED IN ANY EVENT. GOWON QUOTE IN US EDITION AROUSED PARTICULAR IRE OF JOURNALISTS AND POLITICIANS WHO SUPPORT RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE IN 1976, SINCE THEY SEE MATERIAL OF THIS TYPE AS ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO WISH TO PROLONG MILITARY REGIME.

5. WOULD APPRECIATE COPY OF NEWSWEEK DOMESTIC EDITION STORY BY AIR POUCH.
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